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PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

Wiscasset Fire Society

AT ITS

FOUR HUNDRED AND NINETEENTH  
QUARTERLY MEETING

July 20, 1905.





OLD POWDER HOUSE, WISCASSET



PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE  
**Wiscasset Fire Society**



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**July 20, 1905.**

WISCASSET, MAINE:  
Reprinted from THE SHEEPSKOT ECHO.





## **Proceedings of the Four Hundred and Nineteenth Quarterly Meeting of the Wiscasset Fire Society.**

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WISCASSET FIRE SOCIETY.

Instituted in 1801.

WISCASSET, 15th July, 1905.

MR. . . . .

A Special meeting of the Wiscasset Fire Society will be holden on Thursday next, at 6.30 o'clock P. M., at the house of Mr. John C. Grant.

Roll Call in The Grove at 7 o'clock.

You being a member will please give your attendance.

WILLIAM D. PATTERSON, Clerk.

Pursuant to the foregoing notice the members of the Fire Society assembled at the indicated hour and proceeded to the grove where the business meeting was held. Erastus Foote was chosen Moderator. The routine business of the meeting, which took the place of the regular summer meeting, was transacted, and the following report was presented and accepted :

Mr. Moderator and Gentlemen of the Wiscasset Fire Society :—

The committee appointed at the last meeting of the Society to repair the old Powder House have attended to their duty and beg leave to report.

The building has been thoroughly repaired as follows, viz :

The brickwork above and around the doorway has been replaced and a granite slab with the date 1813 cut into it has been placed over the door as a header ; the building has been carefully repointed with Portland cement ; a new casing for the door has been put in with a yellow pine doorstool ; the door itself has been thoroughly strengthened by a 12 inch strip nailed around on the inside with proper braces running across ; the old floor has been taken up and relaid with new and more floor timbers under it ; the holes which were in the plastering, inside, have been neatly patched ; the roof has been made tight and has been painted ; and the whole building has been oiled on the outside. A new lock, with two keys, has been placed on the door and one key given to the selectmen of the town and the other to the clerk of this Society.

Your committee see no reason why, with proper treatment, the Powder House should not remain in a good state of preservation for nearly another hundred years.

In making the above mentioned repairs your committee have taken the greatest care that nothing should be done which would in any way alter the appearance of the building.

The first step which your committee took was to secure from the selectmen of the town the permit which is attached to and made a part of this report.

CHAS. S. SEWALL, }  
JESSE WHITE, } *Committee*  
A. H. LENNOX. }

(COPY OF PERMIT ATTACHED TO THE COMMITTEE'S REPORT.)

We the undersigned, selectmen of the town of Wiscasset, do hereby give permission and authority to the Wiscasset Fire Society to make such repairs on the old Powder House in said Wiscasset as may be necessary for its preservation, said town of Wiscasset to incur no expense or liability whatever on account of such repairs.

Given under our hands this 16th day of April, A. D., 1905.

WM. TAYLOR, } *Selectmen*  
LEONARD B. MARSTON, } *of*  
B. LINCOLN BLADGON, } *Wiscasset*

The Society then adjourned to the house for supper which was served by Mrs. Grant, assisted by the Misses Fannie Hubbard, Carrie Knight, Alice Taylor, Jane Tucker, Minnie Young and Mrs. S. J. Sewall.

The members and guests were seated as follows :

Erastus Foote

Edward H. Wood  
William Taylor  
Alfred H. Lennox  
Frank E. Steadman  
Clarence A. Peaslee  
Frederick W. Sewall  
Jesse White  
Horace E. Henderson  
E. Fred Albee  
Richard H. T. Taylor  
Alvin F. Sortwell

Thomas Bowman  
William G. Hubbard  
Clarence A. Richards  
Joseph P. Tucker  
William A. Tucker  
William D. Patterson  
James E. Ballard  
Charles E. Knight  
Louis C. Bickford  
Charles S. Sewall  
Henry E. Scott  
Henry M. Prentiss

John C. Grant

The exercises, following the supper, consisted of speeches, songs, and stories, and are reported below.

ADDRESS OF WELCOME BY MR. GRANT  
Gentlemen of the Ancient and Hon-  
orable Fire Society:

The march of progress, the growth of cities, and the needs of commerce have unhappily rendered nearly obsolete such organizations as this. Professionalism and specialization have almost driven volunteer Fire Societies out of business. The steam fire engines, the extension ladders, and the fire patrol make it no longer incumbent on nervous men and delicate women in case of fire to throw the looking glass and French clock out of the fourth story window and to bring the bed clothes carefully down stairs in their arms. Instead of that the nervous men may stroll down a luxurious fire escape, and the hysterical women may swoon in the arms of a burly fireman who will land her safely on the ground and climb up after another before she has a chance to come to. In the face of this decline in Fire Societies it is a great pleasure to Mr. Foote and to me that this body remains intact, that we are members of it and that tonight you are our guests.

It is interesting, if not indeed remarkable, that there are present tonight two of our members who are great-grandsons of charter members of the society: Mr. Foote, who represents his great-grandfather, Moses Carlton, Jr., and Mr. F. W. Sewall who represents his great-grandfather, Abiel Wood, Jr. How they did stick to the "Jr." in the good old days. Mr. Carlton was a member of the Society for 56 consecutive years, and Mr. Wood for 33 years.

As I think of it, my daughter here can claim one great-great-grandfather, two great-grandfathers, and one grandfather who were members of this society; so wise was she in the choice of a mother, so wise was I in the choice of a wife, from Wiscasset which is rich in that best of all God's gifts—good women.

We cannot too warmly welcome you to this house. For though it has not yet reached the century mark like some of your Wiscasset houses, it is well toward its scriptural allotment and has for more than 50 years been in close sympathy with your organization. In it one of your members, Mr. Frederick W. Sewall, was born; he is present.

The house was then somewhat differently arranged, and tradition has it that in this very room were first heard the melodious accents of that voice which has spoken so many words of cheer in this community, that in that next room was first seen on his face the smile that has never come off. Nowadays if we need money we go to him, and write two or three words on a slip of paper which he has thoughtfully and kindly prepared beforehand, and then he hands forth the soft currency of the republic in gratifying quantities; if we want better things than money, sympathy, advice, encouragement, best of all a little fun, he is always ready to furnish forth from his inexhaustible treasure house. Yes he was born in this house, and is present. In this house another member, Mr. Isaac H. Coffin, died. He is not present, physically at least; but probably no man ever enjoyed the Fire Society more than he, and if their angels are

always with us, his is here tonight rejoicing.

From this house another member was married, and he is present also.

Welcome then, many times welcome, to a house that has many times reechoed your glad voices and is fragrant with the traditions of the glories of the past.

As a repository of the social life of the village, and as a centre of its activities this body has in the century of its existence done much; but I am convinced that it has much more to do, not only in putting out conflagrations that threaten destruction of property, but more important still, in keeping down the inevitable heat which results from the inevitable friction of life, whether in city, village or country. The Japanese Fire Society has succeeded in cooling off Russia; the friends of honesty have stopped the Equitable from burning the money of its policyholders.

Roosevelt with his tub and hand pump is playing strong on the vicious trusts, and if some volunteer organization could only extinguish Lawson, the country and the world would be safe from lurid menaces.

If any one of you sees his neighbor to-night suffering from combusive tendencies I recommend that you try to extinguish him with such means as may be at hand.

The man who keeps his buckets bright

And fears no conflagration

Will win sweet smiles from many many maids,

And much felicitation.

But he who lets his bed wrench rust

And hastes to fires full sadly,

Will later need the cooling cooling streams

And need them mighty badly.

Men and brethren, we are in the house of friends. "A little nonsense now and then is relished by the best of men." It is a wise man who knows when to let down the bars and turn himself loose; now is the time and here is the place. From this moment until the parting song is sung I hope that we may be boys again, with all the freedom of speech and action that makes boys so happy.

"Has any old fellow got in with the boys?"  
 "If there has put him out, without making a noise."

I want to propose several sentiments which I trust may receive the seal of your approval:

First: Wiscasset as it is; the most truly American place in America, where simple honest toil has its sure rewards and its due esteem. May it never be profaned by great hotels and smoking chimnies; it should be preserved intact for those who by birth-right or by years of discipline are able to interpret and appreciate it.

Second: The Bridge, and Mr. Hubbard who rescued it; may he and it continue long in usefulness.

Third: The esteemed friend, Mr. Henry M. Prentiss, on my right who is to-day celebrating his sixty-fifth birthday; venerable but not a bit old; may the rest of a long life be as full of joy as our glasses now are; as empty of sorrow as they will be in a minute.

And last. The Fire Society! It is to continue through the ages. Happiness to such of its members as have entered on the greater life; prosperity for such as remain. May we have enough sense to have a little fun on every mortal day; to avoid drafts, colds, and fevers; to love duty and to

hate sin; and if we are in danger, to ring the church bell and call on the Fire Society for help.

Fill the bumper fair;  
Every drop we sprinkle  
On the brow of care,  
Drives away a wrinkle."

The next toast, "The Ladies," was most happily responded to by Mr. Prentiss, and Miss Marion Stuart was introduced and sang, in a charming manner, and to the great delight of the Society, the following selections: Waltz from "Romeo and Juliet"

by Gounod.

"Winds in the trees"

by Goring Thomas.

"A May Morning"

by Denza.

Mr. Patterson, being called upon, responded as follows:

Mr. Toastmaster and Gentlemen:—

The recent act of this Society in repairing the Wiscasset powder house suggested to my mind that a brief review of the events that led up to what appears to have been the occasion of building that house would be timely. In looking over the local situation, as disclosed in the records of that time, so much historical matter is found which, if presented at all, should be given with accuracy, that I have committed the same to paper and, with your permission, will read.

Those who were present at the centennial meeting may recall that something of the history of the growth of the commerce of Wiscasset was then briefly traced to the year in which this Society was founded. For several years from that time, 1801, our foreign commerce, in common with that of other ports of the country, prospered in a remarkable degree, by reason particularly of the neutral position of

our government in relation to the mighty contest then being carried on in Europe. It was facetiously said that Wiscasset milked the English cow. A change quickly followed. By the famous decrees of Berlin and Milan, promulgated by Napoleon in 1806 and 1807, and afterwards declared by him to be "the fundamental laws of the Empire", the British Isles were declared to be in a state of blockade and English goods and products and the vessels carrying the same made liable to seizure. By the retaliatory Orders in Council, adopted by Great Britain in 1807, all neutral vessels were prohibited from entering the ports of France and her allies under pain of confiscation. Thus ground, as it were, between the upper and the nether millstones, our commerce was driven from the seas and our merchants and ship-owners thereby subjected to great losses. One instance of this is noticed in the loss of the Ship "Cleopatra", a vessel of 378 tons, built and owned by John Johnston, senior, and his son, Alexander Johnston, at Wiscasset, and said to have been larger than any ship ever previously built on the Sheepscot. That vessel, commanded by Capt. J. E. Scott, the grandfather of our associate in this Society, was captured by the Danes on a passage from London to St. Petersburg, taken into Copenhagen, and there sold as a prize for being laden with English goods. The captain and crew were returned to the English and sent home, having lost their voyage and pay.

But greater provocation to the people at large than these acts was that of Great Britain in claiming and practising the so called right of search



whereby our vessels were hove to on the high seas and boarded by the British in search of alleged British sailors. Notable instances of such outrages were noted in the log book of the Ship "Stirling," another and perhaps quite the most famous of the Johnston ships, in her long-remembered voyage of 1806-7, on board which J. Fenimore Cooper then made his first voyage at sea: and it is related that even her commander, Captain Johnston,—“Captain Jack,”—was himself seized by the king’s officers in London, because he talked pretty broad Scotch, though born in Haverhill, in Essex County. The culminating act of this nature was the affair of the frigate Chesapeake and the English man-of-war Leopard near the mouth of Chesapeake Bay in 1807, when the former was fired upon by the Englishman and twenty-one American sailors were killed or wounded.

The end of the year 1807 was signalized by the Act of Congress placing an embargo on all American vessels by which they were forbidden to leave any port of this country for foreign voyages. It was believed that if Europe could thus be cut off from American supplies for the armies then in the field, the French and, British restrictions on American commerce would be removed.

It may here be interesting to note that the tonnage of square-rigged vessels owned at this port at the time when the effects of this act became manifest aggregated 8405, among which were counted 32 ships,—I doubt if this was exceeded in any port of the then District of Maine. In 1808 the assessed values of real and

personal property and incomes amounted to \$845,000, having increased from \$330,250, in 1801, and the number of polls 471 as against 374 in the year 1801.

As may be readily supposed, political capital was made of the embargo act of the Jefferson administration, and in a pamphlet circulated in the campaign of 1808, defending the embargo, may be read this:

To the Electors of Lincoln District:

If the Embargo was such an unnecessary measure, and such a serious evil, as represented by factious men, it is natural to conclude that those persons who are most largely concerned in Navigation, would not be insensible of the consequences, and would disapprove of the measure: whereas the fact proves directly the reverse. Messrs. Gray, Wood, King and Carlton, are men of the largest concern in commerce; and all approve of the Embargo as a measure necessary for the publick good, and for their own particular interests.

Mr. Bradford is one of that description of aspiring men, who have ever been the bane of Republicks; he is a high toned Federalist; an avowed advocate for an Army, Navy and National Enterprizes, which ever tend to enslave a people and aggrandize their rulers.

Some person has nominated the Hon. ORCHARD COOK, as a candidate at the ensuing election. Mr. C., (although he calls himself a Republican, and is railed against and falsely accused by the Federalist faction) is undoubtedly a Federalist in principle, his proceedings in Congress on matters of the greatest National moment have been as anti-republican as those of any Federalist ever was, without any exception. He is an open and warm friend to war Enterprizes—in

Congress he ardently and perseveringly advocated the establishment of a Navy. In fact, he deviates not, in the least, from high toned Federalism, or Aristocracy: he and Bradford would doubtless very well agree in other points, if they could agree which should go to Congress. They both are greedy after Offices and power; and replete with aristocratic pride.

The pamphlet supports the candidacy of Hon. John Farley, of Newcastle, "a Republican in word and deed." The other candidates were Alden Bradford and Orchard Cook, both of Wiscasset. The vote in this town stood 140 for Bradford, 93 for Cook and 2 for Farley. Cook was re-elected from the District. The "men of the largest concern in commerce," referred to in the pamphlet, were Hon. William Gray, familiarly known as Billy Gray, of Boston; Major Abiel Wood, Jr., of Wiscasset; Hon. William King, of Bath; and Major Moses Carlton Jr., of Wiscasset.

Evidence of the manner in which many of the inhabitants of Wiscasset regarded the embargo act is to be found in our town records. I will read:

To the Selectmen of the Town of Wiscasset:

We the Subscribers, freeholders & Inhabitants of the Town of Wiscasset seriously Considering the ruinous tendency of Our present embarrassed situation request you to call a Meeting of the Inhabitants of said Town as soon as may be to Consider and determine on the following articles, Viz:

First To Choose a Moderator

2d. To see if the Town will forward a Petition to the President of the United States requesting him as far as he is Impowered by Con-

gress to suspend the existing Embargo Laws in the whole or at least so far as it respects our Commerce with Spain & Portugal and their Provinces & Colonies or to adopt any other measure that may be Considered by the Town more proper for removing the present distressing Embarrassments on our Trade & again restoring to us the Blessings of a free & unrestricted Commerce.

Wiscasset Aug. 15th. 1808. \*

Signed:

Abiel Wood	Isaac Hubbard
Hertley Wood	Elisha J. Taylor
John Boyington	Samuel Miller
Jo T. Wood	F. Whitman
Joshua Hilton Jr	John Babson
Tho's H. Nelson	Morrill Hilton
Henry Leeman	Kenelem Cushman
Alden Bradford	John Hodge
Wm. Pitt	Wm Babb
Alex. Cunningham	William Foye
Samuel Adams	Jesse White
Zebediah Thayer	Israel Hunnewell
Thomas Nickels	Joseph Christophers
John Anderson	James Hodge
Henry Hodge	Wm Nickels
Nymphas Stacy	

Pursuant to the foregoing a meeting was duly called and held at the Meeting House on Wednesday, the 17th day of August, 1808, at three o'clock in the afternoon to act on the articles above set forth.

Thomas Rice Esqr. was chosen moderator.

Voted that it is expedient and proper for the Town of Wiscasset respectfully to Petition the President of the United States to suspend the Laws laying the Embargo either wholly or in part

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\*Perhaps the fact that this petition was not signed by David Payson and Abiel Wood, Jr., may properly be explained by their then being members of the board to which it was addressed.

Town Records, Vol. 3, p. 338 et seq.

According to the power vested in him by Congress and that a Committee of five persons be chosen to prepare & submit to the Town a Petition Accordingly.

Voted that Messrs David Payson, Alden Bradford, William Nickels, Jeremiah Bailey & Nathaniel Austin Esquires be the Committee to Draft the Petition aforesaid

Voted that the report of the Committee (after being read in Town Meeting) be Accepted

Voted that the Selectmen of said Town be the Committee to forward said Petition to the President of the United States

Said Petition is as follows Viz

To the President of the United States

The Citizens & freeholders of the Town of Wiscasset in the District of Maine and Commonwealth of Massachusetts in Publick Town Meeting Assembled respectfully represent— That a portion of their property is Vested in Navigation that on Commercial pursuits solely depends their Prosperity & in a great Measure their Means of Subsistence that the Laws of Congress laying an Embargo on the Vessels & export trade of the Country by checking Industry & enterprize in their operations very severely affect your Petitioners and that they are desirous those Laws of the Government should be repealed as speedily as Constitutional authority & procedure will admit & as may be considered Consistent with the Honour & Welfare of the Nation. With great Sincerity your Petitioners express a Cordial Attachment to the Constitution & declare their Determination to submit to the Laws of their Country. Nor will they ever be averse from making any Sacrifices which shall be Necessary to preserve the peace & Independence of the Nation but living under a Govern-

ment formed by & for the good of the People—a Government founded in & Supported by Publick Opinion they conceive it a duty which they Owe Not only to themselves & their Country but to their rulers to Communicate their Sentiments with freedom on Questions of great National Importance—they cannot therefore for a Moment admit that an Application of this Sort will be Considered an Improper Interference

It is Not the Object of your Petitioners to Criminate the Government for a Measure which is found by experiment so prolific of Distress reasons of State unknown to them may have existed which in the Opinion of Government rendered a Temporary Embargo Necessary both to preserve Navigation & to Manifest a Just Resentment for the Aggressions of the Belligerent Powers of Europe Though the arbitrary orders of the Belligerent Nations which are so hostile to the Commerce of America have Not been formally Rescinded yet the prospect of New Channels of Trade to & from the ports of Spain & Portugal serve to press the Conviction that great Advantages would Immediately Accrue by permitting Our Citizens to renew their Commercial Pursuits

Believing that the evils of the Embargo are daily increasing that the Dissatisfaction & Complaints of the people are becoming greater under the Distressing effects of this Measure that they shall be wholly Incapable in this state of things either to Discharge personal Demands or to contribute to the Revenue of Government and that the Advantages of Active Commerce would forever overbalance all the losses to which it is exposed their request is that the restrictions laid on Commerce may be removed whenever their repeal or Suspension can be effected without Compromitting the

Dignity or Sacrificing the Interest of the Nation.\*

The effects of the embargo act operated to weaken the Democratic, or Republican party, as it was then called, especially in the eastern maritime states, and although Governor Sullivan was re-elected and the Madison electors returned, the Federalists succeeded in getting a majority in both houses of the Massachusetts Legislature; and in February, 1809, Congress repealed the obnoxious act, substituting an act of non-intercourse with France and England. A lively relation of the rejoicings of Wiscasset upon the receipt of the President's proclamation of the termination of the embargo is contained in letters written by Captain John Binney of the United States forces garrisoning the then new fort on Davis Island. Captain Binney to his wife, 27th April, 1809.

This town is in an uproar "the Embargo off" is all the cry; the President's Proclamation was received this evening—every man, woman, boy, girl, horse, dog, cat, pig, hen, duck, and all living things are rejoicing, huzza'ing guns firing Bells ringing flags flying not a Wiscasset but what is merry—you cannot imagine anything more noisy than this town—I expect that by 1 o'clock everything that can swallow, will be *haw fairs ye jolly boys*—good night—Major Wood is now waiting for me to go to a grand Jollification

Captain Binney to his wife, Thursday Evening 11 oclck April 27 1809

I wrote you once this evening. I have now just returned from the grand *Jollification*, all Wiscasset are *pretty drunk* by this, the principal part of the trade from this place is

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\*Town Records, Vol. 3, p. 338 et seq.

*timber* to Liverpool, the settlement of the difficulty with Great Britain, on which I *most sincerely congratulate you*, has opened the trade from this Country most completely—all is alive and in fact no part of America has so severely felt the Embargo, as the District of Maine at six o'clk P M the Presidents Proclamation was read in front of the Post Office and in the Lincoln and Kennebec Insurance Office, the principal Gentlemen in the place had their ships *colors* displayed at mast head and three cheers was given thro'out the town, a subscription was opened for Powder and fill'd at once, the Artillery and Infantry company was under arms in 15 minutes—and paraded with drums beating and colours flying, at the request of Major Wood I fir'd from the Battery *abreast the town* four 24 pounders and the citizens from their subscription kept firing until 10 at night at 7 a procession was form'd headed by the aforesaid companies—and all the citizens of the town follow'd 4 deep about 250 men, 500 boys 700 dogs observ'd by 800 women 900 children and 1000 cats besides other animals in great numbers, the procession went thro the principal streets and at convenient distances gave three cheers—drums beating fifes playing Bells a ringing marshals halloing boys squalling guns firing altogether made the most noisome *hurlebello* you ever heard, after parading thro the town the whole went to Fort Hill where grog in *pails* was given the common people, and they were *bid to get roaring drunk as soon as possible*, the Gentlemen adjourned to Dows where Brandy, rum & wine was in abundance, they drank *Madisons* health, the cups went merrily round songs were sung the learn'd *pig Hail Columbia Jno Bull* and many others as the *hobbies* with this addition made by Major Abiel Wood Jr instantaneously viz

"Our hobby is *Madison peace and free trade*"



at 10 they begun to grow noisy I went home and begun this letter I now hear some of the noisy ones it may be they I am interrupted—12 ocl<sup>k</sup> a party have been here they call themselves the *platoon patrole*—these people have again set all the bells ringing about town

Notwithstanding negotiations of much length between the representatives of this government and that of Great Britain, matters went from bad to worse. The situation was further aggravated by the deception practised by Napoleon, who in 1810 caused our government to be informed that his whole system of decrees had been suspended. The non-intercourse act having vested the President with power of suspension, he thereupon immediately suspended its operations so far as it applied to France, but the same being left in force as to England the ill feeling between our country and that became intensified and resulted in a full declaration of war being signed by Madison on the 18th of June, 1812.

News from England quickly followed this act, for among several items relating to Wiscasset contained in a news book kept in the office of the Essex Insurance Company, in Salem, the following is found:

1812, August 6, Orders in Council repealed. A vessel is arrived at Wiscasset from England, left July 3, brings accounts of the repeal of the Orders in Council on the 23rd June.

Again the inhabitants of Wiscasset turned to "the strongest of all citadels of civil liberty, the purest of democracies," the town meeting.

At such a meeting specially held on the 1st of August, 1812, "to take into consideration the alarming state of our Country and see what measures

the town will adopt relative to that subject." it was

Voted That we deem it a sacred and unalienable right "to assemble in an orderly and peaceable manner to consult upon the Common good" to express our opinion of public men and public measures—and to petition our rulers for redress of the wrongs done us, and of the grievances we suffer.

Voted That with deep regret and utter astonishment we find ourselves engaged in an offensive war with a nation, which almost single handed is now struggling for her existence with the most despotic tyrant that ever waged war upon the liberties of mankind—that the differences in our opinion subsisting between us and the power against whom we have so fatally commenced hostilities are susceptible of an honourable adjustment by treaty, and that the declaration of war was premature, impolitic and altogether unnecessary.

Voted That we view with the deepest horror an alliance with the present government of France—a gigantic despotism fatally bent upon the destruction of every vestige of freedom.

Voted That we consider the voice of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts essentially necessary in the choice of our next President, and that the good people thereof ought not to be deprived of the same, by fraud violence or usurpation of party—and that we view with regret and anxious solicitude the refusal of the Senate to agree with the house of Representatives upon some mode (out of the number offered) to appoint electors for that purpose.

Voted To choose four delegates to the County Convention to be held in this Town, and General David Payson, John Merrill Jr. Samuel Miller and John Boynton were accordingly chosen.

Voted That the Selectmen represent to the President of the United States or to the proper Department, the situation of this town as to its means

of defence, and request further aid and protection. \*

And then for a period of two and a half years Wiscasset was in daily dread of depredations by the enemy. Ships were hauled up at the wharves or hidden in out-of-the-way coves or nooks of the rivers. Three of those so hauled up, the "Belisarius," "Alexander Hodgdon" and "United States," were never moved again, their tops rotted off and their bottoms remained as late as 1820.

But that was by no means a period of sheer inactivity. Although fraught with danger from the enemy, the sea could yet be sailed and the adventurous spirit of the men of Wiscasset would not permit them to remain idle while the tides flowed and the winds served. Privateering, with its possibilities of profit, attracted them, and among the ventures of that sort may be mentioned the brig "Paul Jones," owned by Samuel Hubbard, the grandfather of our associate of that name, and others. Probably the most celebrated privateer built here was the brigantine "Grand Turk," of 309 tons, owned by William Gray and Thomas Webb, of Boston, carrying 18 guns and about 150 men. The encounters with the enemy frequently resulted in British prizes being brought to our port, and the officers so captured, being on parole, added somewhat to the social life of the village. Silas Lee, who was a member of this Society, was then the United States District Attorney for Maine, and the dockets of the Federal courts show that there were many condemnations of prizes. A reference to the war and the local situation is found in

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\*Town Records, Vol. 3, p. 537-538.

a private letter from Joseph T. Wood, who was also a member of this Society, to Captain John Binney, before named, dated 7th September, 1813, in which he wrote:

As to news, I have with much pleasure (for a Tory) to say that yesterday my store windows were a third time broken in rejoicing for a naval victory, at the mouth of our River—the encounter was between the U. S. Brig Enterprise & the British Brig Boxer, of about equal size and mettall. the action continued 45 minutes and ended in the capture of the Boxer—further particulars we have not heard, the Wind being ahead they bore away for Portland.

We are all anxiety for the late news from England and the Continent, as probably a little time will decide the fate of the Mediation. We are still sanguine here in its success or that it will lead to Peace. I do believe the Nation is heartily sick of the War, it grows more and more unpopular daily with the People and I believe Mr. Madison finds it more difficult to manage than he expected and is willing to sell out his stock in it at par

Business is very dull here but the people appear cheerful in the hopes of better times—my vessls both got out safe to—————and the prospects are fair for good voyages but I dare not make any calculation in these times—on property out of reach

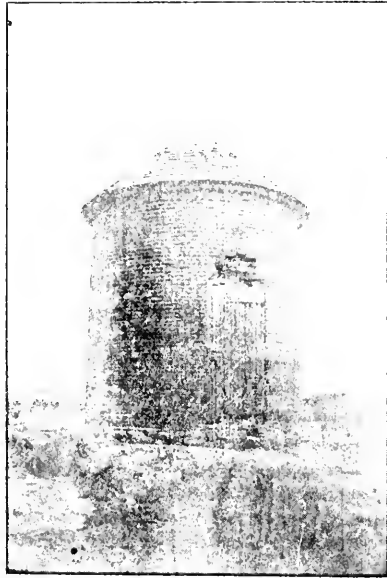
In such a state of affairs it is not surprising that the people of Wiscasset wanted a place where they could keep their powder dry. The exact place of keeping their powder supply is not known, but as it is a matter of record that some towns in this vicinity used to keep their ammunition in the meeting houses, it is not unlikely that might have been the custom here.

At a town meeting regularly held in May, 1813, General David Payson, Col.

Ezekiel Cutter and Major Thomas McCrate were constituted "a committee to provide a suitable place and erect a powder house." Acting under the powers so conferred the committee on the ninth of June, 1813, purchased of Jeduthan Boynton and Cynthia, his wife, in her right "a little lot of land or rock twenty feet square lying a little Northeasterly of the dwelling house of Michael Wharton in said Wiscasset," together with a perpetual right of way to pass and repass from the road or highway with teams or without, for the Inhabitants of the Town of Wiscasset. The work of building the powder house now standing thereon was begun in August, carried on under the direct supervision of Colonel Cutter, and completed in the first part of September. From the bills so incurred and the Committee's return thereof it appears that among the materials used in the building there were eight thousand of bricks, costing six dollars per thousand; that the brick mason and plasterer was Nehemiah Somes, of whose excellent workmanship there are other examples still standing in this village; and that the hinges were furnished by John Warren, a local blacksmith of that time. A charge of sixty cents for rum on the 24th of August indicates the date when the roof was raised. The total of the bills filed by the committee, including twenty dollars paid for the land and ten dollars for Colonel Cutter's commissions on the job, was \$218.96, besides which Judge Lee furnished a quantity of plank and joist to be accounted for to the representative of his estate.

In restoring and preserving from

Further decay this interesting relic of a past century this Society has done well. One of but few such structures that have been preserved, the Wiscasset powder house may, as suggested in the report of our efficient committee, be expected to last through the present century.



Old Powder House as it was.

Mr. F. W. Sewall being next called upon, responded as follows:

Mr. Moderator and Gentlemen of the Fire Society:

It is a very great pleasure to me to be present this evening and enjoy the generous hospitality of our host and to hear these fine speeches. I have specially enjoyed the rulings of our able moderator, Mr. Foote, who while dispensing good things likewise distributes fines right and left in a

most arbitrary manner. I think he partakes of the traditions of the Society in imposing fines on everyone who does not observe a most dignified bearing in addressing the chair. I wish, Mr. Grant, you had called on me to do something for which I was better fitted than speech making. Now if you had a church organ here I might be able to grind out some sort of a tune or even if I had the fiddle I might scrape out something on that but having neither I must ask permission not to take longer of the Society's time.

Mr. Grant said, "I had suspected some skulduggery from this member to evade responding, so I went over to his house this afternoon and stole his old fiddle which the Moderator will now produce." The joke was heartily applauded and too good to be lost, so two selections were given: one from *The Huguenots*, and "Down the Burn, Davy Love" which added to the festivities of the occasion.

The next speaker was Mr. Scott, who said:

Mr. Moderator and Mr. Toastmaster,  
Gentlemen of the Wiscasset Fire Society:

A summons from our host of this evening may not be disregarded, yet I am in about as much doubt and uncertainty as to what to do as was the man who was taking his first ride in an automobile. His friend, who had invited him, had stepped into a drug store, to consult the directory, leaving him in charge of the monster, when suddenly the machine began to move, whether by reason of some defect in its mechanism or because the occupant of the car had, willy nilly, started the wheels moving, was not brought out at the coroner's inquest. As the man

found himself speeding down the street, he called wildly for help: "Tell me what to do, tell me what to do!" As he rolled by, a small boy on the curb shouted to him: "Pull everything you can, and step on everything you see!"

Some such advice as that might be suitable under the present circumstances. A few weeks ago a justice of the Supreme Court of the United States gave as his reason for not wishing to make a speech the fact that, if he said any thing worth saying, people would call him indiscreet, and if what he said was worth saying, they would think him a fool; however, he steered a pretty straight course between indiscretion and folly, and made an acceptable speech.

Now I know that it gives me, and I am sure that it gives the other members of the Society who, like myself, are unable to attend more than one, or at the most, two meetings a year, (if I may be permitted to speak for them.) I am sure that it gives us the very greatest pleasure to be present at this midsummer festival. It is one of the great events of the summer, and we have looked forward to it all through "the winter of our discontent." I think that those of you who are so fortunate as to be residents of Wiscasset the year round hardly realize the lot of the exiles. Why! Boston is considered a pretty decent sort of a place to live in, and yet undoubted-



ly out friend, the member from Boston, could tell us something of the discomforts of life at the Hub, of the recent Reign of Terror under Chairman Emmons, "drest in a little brief authority," of the obstacles placed by the laws of Massachusetts in the way of getting a quiet and satisfactory lunch after 11 p. m., and more which I have not time to relate. Here in Wiscasset, if an alarm of fire is given, the members of this Society, I am told, calmly take down the old leather buckets that hang in the hall—or supposed to hang there subject to a penalty from the Society—and go out to aid their fellowman and to rescue his property. They seldom, I believe, put the fire out. The fire makes a clean job of it, and the victim gets his insurance. But in the city on similar occasions, a lot of clanging, clattering, puffing, and smoking things on wheels, such as we see on the table before us, go hurrying by; they don't give the fire any chance at all, nor the horses either. From that time on the owner of the house has a mortal terror of water.

In Medford, where I spend most of the year, a city rich in historic associations and famous for its product so well known in New England, a product the supply of which is now limited,—in Medford, when we are not wondering what our new mayor is going to do next, we are engaged in hunting the voracious browntails; and just here I wish to warn the members of the So-

ciety that, if that little creature comes to Wiscasset (and I have heard that he is already here,) the mission of the Wiscasset Fire Society is marked out for the next ten years.

Our friend from Garden city could tell us of the sensational state of affairs in New York, of dummy directors, and syndicates, and damaging disclosures in corporation management, which has already been referred to this evening. And then we come to the West. I will not attempt to describe conditions there. In the presence of gentlemen from that part of the country it would not be proper for me to do so. A simple story will suffice. A man from one of the great cities of the Middle West (I think that we will call the city St. Louis,—there is no St. Louis man present) came to New York—this must have been before the creation of Greater New York—and wished to telephone from his hotel in New York City to a friend in Brooklyn. When he had finished using the line, he laid down a dime on the desk, but the girl said: "Fifteen cents, sir." "Fifteen cents," said the man, "why, that's an outrage!" "When you telephone to a point outside the city limits," said the girl, "it costs fifteen cents." "That is an infernal outrage," said the man: "out in St. Louis I can telephone to Hell for ten cents." "Very likely," was the reply, "that is within the city limits out there, you know."

And so from the various conditions in the East, in the Middle States, in the West, from the turmoil and toil of our business or professional life, we have come back, some of us, to-night to this midsummer festival; we have come back to find inspiration and refreshment in the work of the Wiscasset Fire Society. For, as I understand it, this Society has not striven merely for the good of its own members; it is the work which this Society has done and is doing for the benefit of the town of Wiscasset that constitutes its best claim, its best title, to the esteem and regard in which it is held.

A few months ago I read with much interest of the results obtained from the far-sighted policy of the Society, a generation ago, in planting the Centennial trees, many of which still remain to beautify our streets and Common. As we heard at our business meeting this evening, the Society is turning its attention to another praiseworthy task, that of preserving the memorials of the past and handing them down to the future. What has been done in the case of the Powder House might well be done in the case of other historic structures; or spots famous in the history of the town might be marked by suitable memorial tablets, and in such work as this we should have in the person of our esteemed Clerk a guide whose knowl-

edge of local history we all recognize and respect. These undertakings would necessarily devolve chiefly upon the resident members of the Society; but I am sure that the other members—those who wander out from here, as one of our number is about to do, to the shores of Passamaquoddy Bay, and those who seek the land beyond the Mississippi—will gladly co-operate in any course of action which may tend to preserve the memory of the historic past, which may tend to arouse an interest among those who are not members of the Society, or are perhaps not even residents of the town, in the situation and traditions and possibilities of Wiscasset, or which may tend in any way to improve and beautify this spot so rich in memories and associations to every one of us; so that our children and our children's children may come back here year after year, as we do now, with pride and joy and gratitude,—with pride and joy, because they, too, may claim a share in the ancient inheritance of their fathers, and with gratitude to the memory of the founders of this Society and to their successors, who have handed down through more than a century, from one generation to another, the legacy of good will to one another and of love for the town which was their birthplace or their adopted home.

Mr. Charles S. Sewall, being next called upon, spoke as follows:

Mr. Toastmaster, Mr. Moderator and Gentlemen :

This meeting, at this place, is to me one of the most pleasing I have ever attended. As many of you know I was born in the old brick house diagonally across the street, where I now live, and I have always been more or less closely connected with this place. Many the day I have raked hay in the field yonder ; many the apple I have gathered in the orchard through which we just passed ; many the white-oak acorn I have dug out of the leafmould under the tree 'neath which we held our business meeting this evening ; many the day I have worked with and for the former owner of this estate, the late Isaac H. Coffin, who was an enthusiastic member of this society ; and to be here tonight, at a gathering of this kind is, to me, most touching and pleasing.

In these days of "Frenzied Finance," to quote Mr. Lawson, amid the mad rush for the almighty dollar, it is both pleasing and refreshing to find an occasional society such as this, which is cherished and perpetuated by sentiment.

There are far too many men who look at everything from a financial standpoint. With them the question is not "Is it useful" but "Will it pay?" "Is there any money in it?" These men will tell you that sentiment is only for women and children, that the busi-

ness man has no time for sentiment, that it does not pay to be sentimental.

But, thank God, there is another class who do believe that there is something more to be sought in the world than the mere accumulation of wealth, that all sentiment is not bosh, that sentiment does pay. This latter class is made up of the progressive men of the community. They are the men who are powers in the community. They are the men whose names appear on the roster of societies like this.

Which of these two classes is right? Does or does not sentiment pay? Let us see. It was sentiment which led the Pilgrims to leave their homes in England and settle in a new country. Didn't it pay? It was largely sentiment which sent the boys in blue to the south to fight for the preservation of the Union. Didn't that pay? It is sentiment which keeps this glorious land of ours free and united. Doesn't that sentiment pay? It is sentiment which keeps this old society of ours in existence and makes possible such a gathering as this. Doesn't it pay?

If one were to ask a person, not a member of this society, the question "What is the Wiscasset Fire Society?" he would probably receive an answer something like this, "Why it is a society whose members meet once in three months, have a good dinner and enjoy themselves generally." To the casual observer this is all there is to the

Fire Society. But is it all it is to us who are members? No. We know the Wiscasset Fire Society stands for something more than this. If, however we get from this society only a good time: if we come to these meetings only for what we may get to eat, and what fun we may have, then we have failed to grasp the significance of the traditions of the society and are not worthy to be the successors of the illustrious men whose names appear on our roster.

Mr. Toastmaster, as you say, I am going East. "I am travelling toward the East from the West." This will probably be the last meeting at which I shall be present till next July. But, though not present in person, I shall be present in spirit, and wherever I may be, East, West, North, or South, my prayer shall always be, "God bless Wiscasset and the old Fire Society." I thank you for calling on me.

He was followed by Mr. Henderson, who said:

Mr. Toastmaster and gentlemen of the Fire Society:

At such a gathering as this, which is one of a series of meetings extending over a period of considerably more than a century, it is but natural for us to indulge in reminiscences, and over and over again to make use of the expression "the good old times." "All times, when old, are good," says one of our poets: and to paraphrase the

words of Shakespeare, "Nothing is old but in relation." In the days to come, when all of us old fellows have passed away to join the number of those early nineteenth century members of whom we have been hearing with so much delight this evening, and when there remain only the very youngest of us, like our musical friend of perpetual youth, on whose brow and face the passing years leave no more trace than in his heart, when another generation shall have arisen that knows not Joseph—then will the gathering of this evening be spoken of as one of the good old times. Then will the speakers rehearse the dignified and parliamentary decisions of our moderator, the genial courtesy of Grant, the wit of Sortwell, the learning of Patterson, and the fines of Tucker.

These are the times that are good, even before they are old, and when the touch of the passing years has given them the glamor of age, then are they good indeed.

As we have been carried back into the past days when this society was young by the extremely interesting address of our historical associate, and while we have been almost living over those exciting days under his magic spell, we cannot but realize that the founders of this society were men of character and dignity and worth. They formed a large part of time in which they lived, and exerted an influence



far beyond the district that they honored by their residence. They were men of affairs, and were recognized as such, at home and abroad. Although the motive for their organization, as expressed in the constitution, was for the protection of their property against fire, yet they recognized that man is a social animal, and that life would be given to the society by incorporating social features. Hence arose their plan, which we are carrying out, of holding regular suppers at the houses of the members ; and for this provision we owe them thanks, especially while we are enjoying such an evening as this. In their plans, however, they made no provision for deviation from the regularity of their proceedings. It was reserved for men like Sortwell to think of a trip down the beautiful Sheepscot, and Grant to call the roll in the charming grove where we assembled to-night. These innovations were more successful than one I heard of recently. A young parson had determined to break loose from the trammels of custom and be original. He was conducting a funeral service, and after his sermon paused and most impressively remarked, "The mourners will now pass around the bier !"

This grove recalls earlier scenes to me. In the olden days, when Tucker's hair was untouched by gray, several of us who are present attended a children's party there. Later, when a touch of golf fever affected our host,

he laid out a short course there. But you all know that golf is a curious game, involving the knowledge of a language quite different from our usual one. A certain New York judge, who plays regularly at our course, was recently surprised at the extremely youthful appearance of a witness before him. To test the youngster, he asked him, "Young man, do you understand the nature of an oath?" To whom the lad responded, "Had'n't I ought ter? Haint I been your Honor's caddy?" This language seems to have been deemed inconsistent with the dignity of a Presbyterian elder, for after a single session, our host discontinued the course.

But to turn to more serious subjects. We have heard this evening of the important part in affairs taken by the early members of this society. The action of the present year is most appropriate for us. In the preservation of an historic landmark such as the Powder House, we are doing credit to ourselves and honor to our predecessors. It is most fitting that this body, as the oldest organization in this section, should take an interest in the preservation of all memorials of the days gone by. And I wish to take this occasion to present to the consideration of the society, another most worthy object of our efforts. Although it is not situated within the limits our town, yet we have always considered

it as being so situated. I refer to the old Block House. Whatever has been done to keep it up for the past thirty-odd years has been done almost entirely by the people of Wiscasset. With the completion of the new bridge, another summer will see this historic spot again among the attractions of our town, as it was through our boyhood days. A small sum would be sufficient to put it in shape to stand for many years. Effort has been vainly made to get help from Washington. Whatever is done must be done here, and the Fire Society is the organization to do it.

I trust that this suggestion may find such favor with you that next summer we shall make some concerted effort to raise a sufficient sum to repair and restore this landmark of which we are all so fond.

Many songs were sung; and the other speakers were Messrs. Sortwell, Stedman, J. P. Tucker, Lennox, and Bickford, followed by Captain Ballard, who after much urging related in a most graphic manner his recent experience with an automobile which he had undertaken to navigate from Boston to Wiscasset. His remarks were not reported in their entirety but were substantially as follow:

My adventure with an automobile occurred last week, and I assure you that I have reason to be thankful that I am able to be with you tonight.

When I bought the auto in Boston she was warranted to be taut and trim and well found—in fact fit for a lady to drive. Of course I took on a pilot to get her out of Boston, and we made our start ship-shape and Bristol-fashion. I began my first and only experience in navigating that kind of a craft by dropping my pilot about ten miles out of Boston. From that point I took her or rather she took me. And let me say right here that I have been “taken” before; but I soon began to think that I had never been taken to my full significance, as I had never been taken, to my knowledge, for a fool, but that was about the measure of what I thought I would fill before this eventful day was far advanced. I have sailed three times through the Eastern Archipelago, circumnavigated the globe three times and have often been in imminent danger from flood and fire, but never were my nerves so completely unstrung as when I undertook to steer that nondescript craft through the principal but narrow and crowded streets of Salem. But the fact that I am here tonight in a fair state of preservation is evidence that I somehow succeeded in working her through the narrows without running afoul of a policeman.

Before I quote further from my log, I want to relate an incident of early Wiscasset which came to my mind a minute ago as I was looking at Mr. Foote whom I have tonight met for

The first time in many years, though we were boys together here. One day as I was standing at the corner of Main and Middle streets, I glanced down toward Stacy's corner, and spied Mr. Erastus Foote, Sr., then collector of the port, and his son Erastus Foote, Jr. the moderator of this meeting. Mr. Foote, Sr., was standing on one end of a plank, and Mr. Foote, Jr. on the other end of the same plank, talking with Mr. Joshua Marston, who was superintending some building operations. Mr. Marston abruptly said to one of the workmen, "You may take a foot off from each end of that plank." Mr. Foote, Sr., who dearly loved a joke' showed his appreciation of Mr. Marston's wit by giving to him an apple out of a basket that our moderator was then carrying.

Now to resume my story: After leaving Salem the car ran along all right until I approached a hill about four miles from Ipswich, and there I noticed that the power was weakening, and looking over the side I detected a little stream of gasoline, no bigger than a lead pencil, running out into the road. Just then a big car that was coming down the hill hove to as they saw my union down, and a lady on board at once exclaimed, "Oh! my Lord! can't you do something to stop that gasoline running?" and a gentleman who appeared to be the owner very kindly aided me in a survey of the

craft, and finding the trouble beyond our ability to remedy he took me in his car to the top of the hill, where he took on board one of his employees and we returned to my car. As he drove between the big gate posts of his place, just clearing one of them, I caught my breath and wondered whether I should ever be able to drive my machine in that apparently reckless way. After working for an hour,—and I never worked any harder in my life,—we got the car under way and I took the helm again and bore away for Ipswich, where I arrived without further mishap, but on reaching the foot of a certain hill at the approach to the Agawan House I was again stopped by a loss of power and was obliged to get a pair of horses to tow my car up to the hotel, where I had to lay up for fuel. And, will you believe it, I had scarcely got started from there when, coming up with the hill that everybody has to mount to get out of that town, I noticed that the power was beginning to run down again. I drew up by the roadside, at a little store that was in charge of a very well-appearing young woman to whom I related my trouble, stating that owing to my inexperience in handling such craft I was in distress and asked if she could direct me to an engineer, which she did and I was fortunately able to get his services so far as to enable me to again resume my voyage, which proceeded with more mishaps than I have the time to relate tonight.

Universal sympathy was expressed for the gallant captain, and with the hope that he would be able to get her towed into port without paying too much salvage, the society sang *Auld lang syne*, and adjourned.



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